

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 17167

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, OCON, AWACS, MILI

SUBJECT: GERMAN MILITARY COMMENTS ON NATO ARMS ISSUES

REFS: (A) NATO 5299; (B) NATO 5399; (C) PARIS 29511

1. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION, ONE OF THE SENIOR
GERMAN MILITARY FIGURES TOLD US THE FOLLOWING ON
THREE NATO ARMS ISSUES:

--REGARDING AWACS, HE RESTATED THE USUAL GERMAN
POSITION THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO BUDGET THE COSTS
IN LIGHT OF EXISTING PLANS AND THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO
BE ENOUGH OTHER NATO PARTICIPATION TO MAKE IT TRULY A
NATO PROGRAM. HE ALSO EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT THE
SYSTEM-RELATED GROUND COSTS, SUCH AS IMPROVED LATERAL
COMMUNICATIONS TO HANDLE DATA COMING FROM AWACS. HE SAID
NO DECISION COULD PROBABLY BE MADE BEFORE THE EARLY
PART OF 1977, BUT SAID THE GERMANS WERE STUDYING THE
SYSTEM SERIOUSLY AND UNDERSTOOD ITS POTENTIAL MILITARY
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BENEFITS.

--WITH REGARD TO ROLAND, HE SAID HE WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT RECENT STORIES SUGGESTING THAT ADDED AMERICAN REQUIREMENTS WOULD RAISE THE COST OF THE MISSILE TO SUCH A LEVEL THAT THE US COULD NOT BUY IT. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THIS WOULD BE REGARDED AS A SETBACK TO STANDARDIZATION.

--WITH REGARD TO THE TANK PROGRAM, HE SAID THE GERMAN ARMY BELIEVED THE HYBRID LEOPARD II-XM-L WOULD BE THE BEST POSSIBLE TANK. IT WOULD HAVE THE BENEFITS OF THE TURBINE ENGINE AND OF THE 120MM GUN WHICH STILL HAS GREAT POTENTIAL. HE OBSERVED THAT, IF THE HYBRID WERE NOT BUILT, MANY EUROPEAN NATIONS WOULD PROBABLY BUY THE LEOPARD II SINCE THEY APPEARED TO BE IMPRESSED BY LEOPARD I.

2. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT THESE OBSERVATIONS ON AWACS ARE LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN THOSE MADE BY DR. TRIENES (REF B) BUT MORE PARALLEL TO THOSE MADE BY DR. MANN (REF A), WHO IS, OF COURSE, SENIOR GERMAN OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH ARMS PURCHASES. WE SUSPECT SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS MAY REFLECT THE FACT THAT THE GERMAN MILITARY ARE STILL SOMEWHAT MORE RESERVED ABOUT AWACS BECAUSE OF WHAT IT MIGHT DO TO THEIR BUDGETS THAN ARE SOME CIVILIAN OFFICIALS AT THE MOD. MANN IS OBVIOUSLY BEING VERY CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT HIMSELF TOO EARLY. WE WILL FOLLOW THIS UP TO TRY TO LEARN MORE.

3. WE ALSO NOTE THAT THE COMMENTS REGARDING POSSIBLE TERMINATION OF THE ROLAND PROGRAM PARALLEL THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY PARIS (REF C).
HILLENBRAND

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